Important discussions were held over the course of the day and a half Legal Summit. The timely topics covered were business and trade, environment, and immigration. The captivating panelists presented on information that most attendees had not heard before. For example, the Business and Trade panel discussed the 25-year-old NAFTA agreement and the proposed United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), on which the clock is ticking for adoption. It was made evident in the panel discussion that the three countries were trying to balance trade policy with politics and that we are now in a different era.

The Environmental Panel presented the truth about our current environmental situation, discussion was focused on the Paris Agreement. The panel covered what countries are trying to do, the effect of the U.S. withdrawal from this Agreement and the fact that even if all countries comply with it, the changes may not be enough. It was sobering to learn that the climate changes and drastic climate events we are experiencing will only increase. It was also brought up that the climate issues will impact poorer countries and that they will feel the brunt of the climate events. A common thread revealed was the lack of political will from the leaders of all three countries. Nuclear energy was discussed as one possible aid. One speaker stated we were in a race against time and he felt a “revolution of some sort was going to happen.”

The Immigration Panel was as equally compelling as the other two panels. Discussion covered the anti-immigrant sentiment the U.S. as well as across the world. An interesting discussion was held regarding how Canada and Mexico realize the need for immigrants because there is a need to replace dwindling populations and fill vacant worker positions. It has taken a long time for Mexico to understand that the human capital brought by immigrants is important for a healthy economy and country. The same dynamics apply to the U.S., but the insight and practical approach does not prevail.

Tom Saenz President and General Counsel of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund was the keynote for the event. Other speakers included; Bob Carlson President of the American Bar Association, Michelle Gallardo Reporter for ABC7 News Chicago, John Cruickshank Consul General of Canada in Chicago, and many additional noteworthy presenters.

By all accounts our initial Legal Summit of the Americas was a tremendous success. The morning of the second day was devoted to reflection on the presentations and brainstorming what comes next. The discussions on this day were led by Cheryl Niro. A Report will be issued on the Legal Summit and pursuant to popular demand plans are already underway for a follow up Legal Summit of the Americas in the future. The Commission on Hispanic Legal Rights and Responsibilities thanks all who made the Summit possible, especially the panelists, attendees, and sponsors.